



Fact Sheet

United States Air Force

Secretary of the Air Force, Office of Public Affairs, Washington, D.C. 20330

82-36



SR-71

The SR-71, unofficially known as the "Blackbird," was developed from the YF-12A as a long-range, advanced strategic reconnaissance aircraft. It can perform both pre-attack and post-attack strategic reconnaissance missions.

This aircraft is one of the fastest and highest-flying in the skies today. The SR-71 flies at more than three times the speed of sound at altitudes above 80,000 feet. Three times the speed of sound (Mach 3) is more than 2,000 miles per hour or about 3,100 feet per second at sea level.

Each of the two J58 turbojet engines is housed in a large nacelle mounted away from the fuselage on either side of the aircraft's

delta wing. Aerial refueling gives the SR-71 global range.

The SR-71 carries a wide variety of advanced observation equipment from battlefield surveillance systems to multiple-sensor, high-performance systems capable of specialized surveillance. It can survey 100,000 square miles of the Earth's surface in one hour from an altitude of 80,000 feet.

SR-71 development began in February 1963, and in January 1966 the first SR-71A was delivered to the 9th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing at Beale Air Force Base, Calif.

When President Johnson announced the SR-71's existence on July 24, 1964, he stated, "The system will be used during periods of

military hostilities and in other situations in which the U.S. military forces may be confronting foreign military forces...." Reconnaissance missions are flown over part of the United States to test the aircraft and its systems and to maintain crew proficiency.

The aircraft carries a crew of two in tandem seats. When preparing for a flight, crew members report to the wing's unique physiological support division for a preflight physical, high protein meal and several briefings on weather and special mission characteristics.

When this is completed, they are helped into their special flight gear by physiological support technicians who will stay with them until they are aboard the SR-71 and connected to its life-support systems.

In September 1974 an SR-71A established two world speed records in less than two weeks. On Sept. 1, the aircraft flew 3,490 miles from New York to London in 1 hour, 54 minutes, 56.4 seconds, with an average ground speed of 1,806.987 miles per hour. On Sept. 13,

the same aircraft flew 5,645 miles from London to Los Angeles in 3 hours, 47 minutes. The slower average ground speed of 1,480 miles per hour was due to an added aerial refueling. The SR-71 arrived, by local time, almost four hours before its departure from London.

In July 1976, SR-71s set seven new world records. On July 27, an SR-71 set three speed records flying over a 1,000-kilometer (621.369 miles) closed circuit course: an absolute speed record and a class speed record of 2,092.294 miles per hour without carrying a payload, and a class speed record of 2,092.294 miles per hour carrying a 2,204.6-pound payload.

On Sept. 28, an SR-71 set two world altitude records in a horizontal sustained flight without payload: an absolute altitude record and a class altitude record of 85,068.997 feet. Also on Sept. 28, another SR-71 set two world speed records in the last 10 kilometers of a 25-kilometer straight course without payload: an absolute speed record and a class speed record of 2,193.16 miles per hour.

Specifications

Primary function: strategic reconnaissance

Prime contractor: Lockheed Aircraft Corp.

Power plant/manufacturer: two Pratt & Whitney J58 turbojet engines with afterburners

Thrust: in excess of 30,000 lb each engine with afterburning

Dimensions: wingspan 55 ft 7 in, length 107 ft 5 in, height 18 ft 6 in

Speed: more than 2,000 mph

Ceiling: above 80,000 ft

Range: more than 2,000 miles at Mach 3, global with aerial refueling

Armament: none

Crew: two--pilot and reconnaissance systems officer

Maximum takeoff weight: 170,000 lb

Status: operational